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CURRENT OPINION

The Evolution of the System of Ritschl

Ritschlianism was the biggest theological factor in the second half of the nineteenth century and is still a living system. In the *London Quarterly Review* for January, 1914, Dr. H. R. Mackintosh studies in "Ritschlianism Old and New" the evolution of this great system. Ritschl meant to give unity and freedom to the Christian consciousness by taking as the touchstone of religious thought not a creed but a living and immediate faith in God through Jesus Christ. In respect to the thought of God, of sin, of redemption, of Christian perfection, we ought to ask, first of all: What truth about these subjects is certified by faith in Jesus? Theology must be written from the point of view of the specifically Christian mind: religious knowledge is the knowledge of a religious man; nobody can understand it who is not personally a believer, the unbeliever is as little of an expert in religion as a dog in a picture-gallery. Truth in religion is attained by avenues different from those employed in scientific or historical research. As for metaphysic, it does not really touch the problems which most concern religious people; it has nothing to say on sin and forgiveness, on prayer and the self-consciousness of Jesus. Christ is a unique universal and complete revelation of the grace of God, he is the principle of knowledge at every point in religious thought. Christian truth is further vitally related to the church as a society called into existence by divine intention. Ritschl did not think out his system of the church as completely as other parts of his dogmatics but he rightly insisted upon the church taking once again something like the subduing and commanding place it receives in the Scriptures, at the very center of the spiritual experience. The church is the vehicle by which Christian

worship goes down from generation to generation; it is the historic medium through which primitive faith touches men of today; it is the first and proper object of justification so that we are forgiven because we belong to a forgiven society; thus and thus only. Ritschlianism held such a wonderful sway for three reasons: first, because it planted faith on the rock of historic fact; secondly, because of the fidelity of Ritschl to the ideal and essence of the Reformation; thirdly, because for him the Christian religion stood for power and spiritual health. Harnack said in 1897 that Ritschl was the latest "Church Father." Certainly his system is now in circulation more widely than is always recognized; whatever we may think of Ritschl's conclusions, it remains that his method has been more generally adopted than we should think. Disciples of Ritschl have freely criticized their master. This attitude to critical tendencies was fairly cool. He considered, for instance, the kingdom of God as a purely ethical conception and did not take into account the apocalyptic hopes of the time of Jesus. He was averse to sentimentalism and scarcely gave to the doctrine of eternal life a proper place in his system. This conception of sin was perhaps external and cold, hence his notion of the redeemer does not seem to be complete. In fact he has been too much under the influence of Kant. Thus, for instance, it was Kant who taught him to say that the divinity of Christ is his perfection of moral character; yet this is only one element of the truth. It is also a Kantian idea that we are related to the glorified Lord only through our knowledge of the historical Jesus. Certainly St. Paul did not think so and Christians know how their spiritual life implies the presence and activity of Christ

in a mode transcending time and space. Radical or liberal disciples of Ritschl have not improved his system. Their attacks on the supernatural will never persuade a Christian who knows that faith in the living God can never be tabulated in terms of law, evolution, and uniformity which are after all categories of the mind. A certain misty conception of historical events in connection with faith is no advance on the Ritschlian conception of history and the church as sources of truth. In conclusion, Dr. Mackintosh says that the fundamental principles on which Ritschl built his system remain true: Christianity rests on the historic Christ, and, in the experience of the redeemed, sonship by grace is the central and organizing fact and the basis of theology.

Does Adam Mean One Man or Mankind?

Does the word "Adam" as used in the creation story mean one person or mankind in general? is the subject treated by Dr. J. Boehmer in the *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* for January, 1914, in an article entitled: "Wieviel Menschen sind am letzten Tage des Hexaemeron's geschaffen worden?" Dr. Boehmer thinks that the word "Adam" is collective, first because in the creation story the words translated by the English version, grass, herbs, fruit-trees, swarms of living creatures, birds, are collectives in Hebrew (and not plural forms); we should expect that Adam would be also a collective. Moreover, in Gen. 1:26 God says: "Let us make man [or mankind] in our image . . . and let *them* have dominion," etc. The only way to explain the use of the plural here is to assert that the writer means the first man and his wife. But Old Testament writers did not hold such a high conception of woman as to associate her with man in the lordship over the universe on an equal footing with man. Dr. Boehmer says that a religion of which the sign of ini-

tiation is circumcision, which ranks woman with the animals as a helpmeet for man (Gen. 2:18 ff.), which even now requests of her devotees to repeat in the synagogue "Blessed be thou, O Lord, our God, Eternal King, because thou hast not made me a woman," a religion which has put even in our own New Testament traces of the Semitic low conception of woman, certainly could not make woman a ruler with man over the whole creation. We should therefore understand the word "man" in the story of the sixth day of creation as meaning mankind. The thesis of Dr. Boehmer is not new but it is ably put forth.

Things New and Old

The modern man lacks religious imagination, says John Edwards Lebosquet, writing on "The Modern Man's Religion" in the *Harvard Theological Review* for January, 1914. For instance, he does not care very much for immortality. Mr. Winston Churchill in his recent novel, *The Inside of the Cup*, studies a number of vital questions, from what is, after all, the modern man's point of view, but he is silent on the belief in immortality. Mr. Lebosquet thinks that the dislike of modern men for authority and dogmas springs from the same lack of imagination. Not that the modern man despises authority as such but he wants to find a reason for obeying. For this same reason the church is practically ignored: it is not hated but it is bowed out of practical life. This again is owing to the lack of imagination: the modern man does not seem to understand very clearly that a church may be up to date while it is an ancient institution. The modern man, however, is not skeptical or indifferent for all that. If he does not encumber himself with dogmas and does not see the beauty of religious symbolism, it is again lack of imagination; the value of the symbolic, whether in creed or in ritual, eludes the modern man. Modern creeds like Christian Science and New

Thought are strong in their suppression of what they call vain imaginings of fear and sickness. Modern comforts lull the modern mind to forget dreams of a future life, modern research has clipped the wings of fancy so that the world of a modern man is after all very limited and his religion has become narrow in its visions and out-reachings. These negative aspects, however, are only the obverse of positive religious assets: if the average modern man is rather proud of his indifference to immortality it is because he insists upon his concern with present tasks and opportunities; he rejects authorities because he feels intensely the value of the individual; he neglects church-religion because he prefers to be busied with what is more practical; so that the modern man's religion, in spite of its shortcomings, shows a great deal of creative power in the sphere of improvement and usefulness. How different, for example, are the Eastern pundit who submits to Fate and the American who does not wait for things to happen but goes ahead and makes them happen; and this is religion as well, although of a different kind. The modern man has sympathy for the needy; he will be roused by injustice; he cannot pass by suffering unmoved; the ancient religious man could do so but the modern world, although it calls itself sometimes irreligious, has been Christianized in its feelings and the brotherhood of man has become a never-failing spring of action; we may lack horizon and have a slight sense of the historic faith but after all the religion of man was never so free from selfish motives, never so vital and sincere as now. Moreover, signs are not wanting that what is lacking in the modern man's religion attracts again the interest of an élite and we can hope to see a synthesis of intellectual clarity and a sense of historical symbolism with this practical idealism which is the glory of our religious life of today.

A Plea for Biblical Archaeology

In the *Open Court* for April, 1914, Mr. G. H. Richardson writes on "The Value of Archeological Study for the Biblical Student." Too many preachers depend for information on old books which are now out of date in many of their statements. Mr. Richardson heard a minister quoting Canon Farrar to the effect that the Ten Commandments were the earliest historic code which has come down to us. Evidently the name of Hammurabi and of his code written a thousand years before Moses was unknown to that preacher. In another instance pictures of the death of Samson are shown in Sunday schools which represent the hero of Israel tearing down huge stone pillars. We know from Professor MacAlister's excavations at Gezer that the portico of the temple of Gezer was supported by pillars resting on column bases. It may be supposed that a strong man could move these pillars out of the perpendicular, seeing that they merely rested on the top of the stone base, and then the weight of the building would push them off their bases. A third instance of inaccuracy could easily be cured if more attention were paid to archaeological results. Certain professors still use the name of New Testament or biblical Greek to designate the language of the New Testament. We know, however, from the Greek papyri discovered in Egypt that the language used by the writers of the New Testament is just the kind of Greek that simple folk used at that time. One after another, the so-called "Hebraisms" of the New Testament have been exactly paralleled in the papyri and ostraca. Deissmann estimated that the total number of "biblical" words in the New Testament is not more than 1 per cent of the whole vocabulary. Study of archaeology makes the ancient East more living to us and can be made as interesting as any other science.

The Pre-existence of Jesus

In the *American Journal of Theology* for January, 1914, Mr. R. H. Strachan writes on "The Idea of Pre-existence in the Fourth Gospel." The Prologue of the Gospel of John identifies Jesus with the Logos, but in such a way that we must regard the Prologue as a preface composed after the rest of the gospel was written and intended to commend it to the Greek world. For the Prologue, the Logos is the agency through which the world was created; it is clear that the writer has in view Gen., chap. 1, and experiences, in common with later Jewish thinkers, a certain unwillingness to bring God in immediate contact with the world. It is not, however, the conception of the creative activity of the Logos that determines the evangelist's conception of the person of Jesus Christ, but rather the other way: the writer has reflected upon the miracles and the teaching and the life of Jesus and as the outcome of his meditation has identified Jesus with the *Memra* or the Logos. Indeed, it would be difficult to explain how a preconceived notion of the identity of Jesus with the creative activity of the Logos would have led the author of the Fourth Gospel to choose as typical such miracles as the Cana miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water, or the raising of Lazarus. It is easier to conceive how these stories suggested, and were not suggested by, the idea of universal creative activity. Hence the pre-existence of Jesus outside of the Prologue is the pre-existence of one who is more than the Messiah, and yet not the pre-existence of a divine Logos, by which the worlds were created. The object of the gospel is plainly to prove that Jesus is the Christ. In this respect the thought of the pre-existent activity in the gospel itself is less wide in scope than in the Prologue. In the gospel itself the word

λογός means the intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father; this relationship confers everlasting life. Jesus claims, therefore, that he is greater than Abraham (John 8:56). The Jews answer at once that this is absurd, since he, Jesus, is not fifty years old, and therefore has not yet attained to perfect manhood. Jesus answers, enigmatically as it seems, "Before Abraham was born, I am." In order to investigate the nature of the pre-existence attributed to Jesus here we must study the Jewish conception of pre-existence. The Talmud teaches a real pre-existence of the Messiah in a premundane form. This talmudic doctrine is late and post-Christian, it is true, but it is impossible to believe that it was influenced by Christian thought. The influence of Christian thought upon Jewish messianic beliefs acted rather in the opposite direction. We may therefore accept a pre-Christian date for the Similitudes of Enoch and the conception of a pre-existent Messiah found there. We are here in the presence of a powerful trend of Jewish thought which probably exercised an influence on the mind of Jesus himself. The pre-existence of the Messiah is hinted in Dan. 7:13, 14 and taken for granted in Enoch. Mr. Strachan thinks that Jesus used apocalyptic imagery in moments of special exaltation as a form of self-expression. The Fourth Gospel embodies an apocalyptic conception rather than the Logos-conception of the Prologue. The author does not merely repeat, like the synoptists, traditional apocalyptic utterances of Jesus—he moves with freedom and ease amid the apocalyptic ideas that his Master chose as forms of self-expression; he treats these, in fact, like other parts of the teaching of Jesus, interpreting them through his own consciousness of their religious value and signification.